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Colorado's water needs get a fresh look in new reports

DENVER, Colo. – A new study by the state water planning agency has found that the amount of water Colorado will have to develop by 2050 in order to meet population growth, economic expansion and satisfy environmental needs is growing – along with projected costs.

Between 2010 and 2050, demographers predict Colorado's population will nearly double - swelling from about 5 million to 10 million. Most of the increase is expected to occur in the South Platte and Arkansas basins of the Front Range.

State water providers will need to develop additional water or implement conservation measures for 830,000 to 1.7 million acre-feet to meet projected municipal and industrial demands, according to a draft report issued this month by the Colorado Water Conservation Board.

"These reports further demonstrate why it is so important that Colorado address water planning with renewed urgency," said Harris Sherman, executive director of the Department of Natural Resources and chairman of the Interbasin Compact Commission. "We have no time to waste."

The draft report, "State of Colorado 2050 Municipal and Industrial Water Use Projections," is one of four new technical reports released by the CWCB. The other three draft reports include a new mapping process that provides a first-ever assessment of environmental and recreational needs by basin, a pilot study of a new watershed flow evaluation tool for the Roaring Fork and Fountain Creek watersheds, and a new evaluation of water supply strategies.

In order to meet these consumptive and non-consumptive needs, Colorado will need to rely on a mix of conservation, agricultural transfers, and new water supply development and make substantial, long-term investments. For example, a new water supply project yielding 250,000 acre-feet will cost between \$7.5 and \$10 billion. This exceeds previous cost projections.

One of CWCB's roles in the Interbasin Compact Process is to support the on-going implementation of the Water for the 21st Century Act. Over the past two years, the CWCB worked with the Interbasin Compact Committee (IBCC) and Colorado's nine Basin Roundtables on the four recently released draft reports.

Over the next several months CWCB will be soliciting feedback on these drafts from Basin Roundtable members and other interested stakeholders. CWCB will incorporate feedback into these draft technical reports as it continues to implement programs that help address Colorado's water supply future.

Future efforts will likely include a statewide update of Colorado's consumptive and non-consumptive needs, an updated assessment of the gap between municipal and industrial water supplies and future needs, an analysis of alternative agricultural transfer programs in Colorado, an evaluation of a Conservation Strategy, further refinement and evaluation of water supply strategies, and a new database to track the progress of municipal water supply projects, conservation efforts, and planning processes.

The draft reports are available online at:
<http://cwcb.state.co.us/IWMD/COsWaterSupplyFuture/>

To find out more about the CWCB go to www.cwcb.state.co.us or contact Lisa Barr at (303) 866-3441.

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